

Message Text

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PAGE 01 COLOMB 00199 181237Z

43

ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 A-01 OPR-02 SY-10 NIC-01 OMB-01 AID-20 DRC-01

IO-14 SAB-01 /141 W

----- 013156

R 181200Z JAN 74

FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 440

INFO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMCONSUL MADRAS

C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 199

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, RJ

SUBJ: REPERCUSSIONS OF JAFFNA DISTRUBANCE

REF: A) COLOBO 111; B) MADRAS 66

1. REACTION IN SRI LANKA TO JAN 10 DISTRUBANCE IN JAFFNA HAS SO FAR BEEN LIMITED AND MUTED. WHILE PRESS REPORTS SPU DETAILS OF INCIDENT HAVE BEEN RELATIVELY OPEN, THERE HAS BEEN STRIKING ABSENCE OF COMMENT OR OPINION FROM ANY DIRECTION-- GOVT, NEWSPAPER EDITORIALS, OR TAMILS THEMSELVES. PRESS REPORTS AND STATEMENTS OF EMBASSY EYEWITNESS TAMIL SOURCES STRONGLY SUGGEST LOSS OF CONTROL AND OVER-REACTION BY POLICE WHICH CAUSED PANIC AND STAMPEDE. OFFICIAL DEATH TOLL IS CURRENTLY NINE AND MAGISTRATES INQUIRY IS PROCEEDING.

2. SITUATION IN JAFFNA WAS REPORTEDLY CALM DURING PAST WEEK, ALTHOUGH ONE PRO-GOVT MP'S HOME WAS FIREBOMBED. ELSEWHERE SCATTERED GROUPS OF STUDENTS HAVE DEMONSTRATED PEACEFULLY BUT INCIDENT APPEARS SO FAR NOT TO HAVE GENERATED OUTBREAK OF ANTI-GSL SENTIMENT. MOST CONSISTENT LINE OF PRESSURE ON GSL FROM TAMILS OF ALL SHADES OF OPINION IS TO ESTABLISH INDEPENDENT COMMISSION OF INQUIRY,
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DEMAND WHICH HAS FAILED TO ELICIT GSL RESPONSE. IF SET UP,

COMMISSION PROBABLY WOULD FOCUS ON DUBIOUS PRESS ALLEGATIONS OF DMK INTRIGUES. ON WHILE, HOWEVER, SURPRISING SILENCE OF TAMIL POLITICIANS, INCLUDING TAMIL UNITED FRONT SPOKESMAN, INDICATES THEY ARE UNDECIDED ON HOW TO REACT.

3. GOVTS HANDLING OF DISTURBANCE, ACTING AS IF IT HAD NOT OCCURRED, REFLECTS DESIRE TO AVOID HITCH IN PRIME MINISTER BANDARANAIKES VISIT TO INDIA NEXT WEEK.
VAN HOLLEN

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NNN

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